

# News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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## **Markey Hails Passage of Potassium Iodide Initiative**

### **Provision to Stockpile "Cipro of nuclear radiation" Attached to Bioterrorism Bill**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. --**

Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) today welcomed passage of the House Bioterrorism bill, H.R. 3448, which included provisions aimed at increasing stockpiles of potassium iodide as a public health response in the event of a successful terrorist attack on or accident at a nuclear power plant. Rep. Markey has been pressing for such a measure in response to the attack of September 11, and worked out the language in the Commerce Committee that passed the House today.

"Potassium iodide is to radiation exposure of the thyroid what Cipro is to Anthrax," Rep. Markey explained. "Since potassium iodide must be taken within a few hours of exposure to radioactive iodine to be effective, it needs to be easily obtained by the people who live close to a nuclear reactor. This bill will, for the first time, authorize distribution of stockpiles of this substance to local public health officials without requiring a formal request from the States. It is a huge step forward for every community that resides within 20 miles of a nuclear reactor."

Rep. Markey is a senior Democratic Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and is the author of H.R. 3279, which would mandate stockpiling and distribution of potassium iodide as a supplement to sheltering and evacuation in the event of a catastrophic nuclear accident, such as one resulting from a successful terrorist attack. Under the compromise provision Rep. Markey worked out with the sponsors of the House bioterrorism bill, the Secretary of Health and Human Services would be required to make potassium iodide available to State and local governments for stockpiling and distribution to public facilities, such as schools and hospitals, within 20 miles of every nuclear power plant in the United States.

Potassium iodide has been proven to protect the thyroid gland from diseases caused by exposure to radioactive iodine released during a nuclear catastrophe. Children are most vulnerable to radiation-induced thyroid diseases because their thyroid glands are very active. To receive the drug, State and local governments must submit a plan for distribution and utilization of the tablets in the event of a nuclear incident.

In addition, Rep. Markey applauded the inclusion of other provisions amending a 1996 bioterrorism law Rep. Markey had co-authored which required facilities that transfer potentially lethal biologic agents to register with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Today's bill expands the requirements for registration with the CDC by requiring all facilities that possess any one of a series of select agents to register with the CDC and establish new criminal offenses involving the handling of these agents.

Rep. Markey concluded, "The potassium iodide and select agents registration provisions of the bill being introduced today are important steps towards protecting the public from the threat of bioterrorism or nuclear terrorism."

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[www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).

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